

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A suturing device comprising:

a housing;

a shaft extending distally from a distal end of the housing;

a needle movable within the shaft and with respect to the housing, the needle being attached to a length of suture; and

a suture cutting blade positioned on the housing such that when the needle is withdrawn from the device, the suture can be drawn across the blade to sever the suture.
2. (Canceled)
3. (Previously presented) The suturing device of claim 1, wherein the housing further includes a proximal end, and the blade is positioned near the distal end of the housing.
4. (Canceled)
5. (Original) The suturing device of claim 3, wherein the needle and the suture are withdrawn from the proximal end of the housing.

6. (Previously presented) The suturing device of claim 1, wherein the housing further includes a proximal end, and the blade is positioned near the proximal end of the housing.

7. (Previously presented) The suturing device of claim 1, wherein the blade is mounted on an outside of the housing.

8. (Original) The suturing device of claim 1, wherein the housing is a hollow body having a proximal opening and an inner surface, and the blade is mounted on the inner surface.

9. (Original) The suturing device of claim 1, wherein the housing includes a finger grip and the blade is mounted on the finger grip.

10. (Original) The suturing device of claim 1, wherein the device further comprises a movable handle, and the blade is mounted on the movable handle.

11. (Original) The suturing device of claim 1, wherein the needle has a distal end and the suture is attached to the distal end of the needle.

12. (Currently amended) A suturing device comprising:
- a housing having a proximal end and a distal end; a suture cutting blade positioned on the housing;
 - an elongate shaft extending distally from the distal end of the housing, the elongate shaft having a distal end region;
 - a needle actuation handle movable through the proximal end of the housing; a needle extending from the needle actuation handle, through the housing and further through the shaft; and a suture carried by the device, wherein a portion of the suture is positioned near the distal end region of the shaft such that the needle pulls the suture proximally to position the suture through tissue.
13. (Original) The suturing device of claim 12, wherein the blade is positioned near the distal end of the housing.
14. (Original) The suturing device of claim 13, wherein the needle pulls the suture through the proximal end of the housing.
15. (Original) The suturing device of claim 12, wherein the housing defines an opening near the distal end, and the blade is positioned in the opening.
16. (Original) The suturing device of claim 12, wherein the needle and the suture are withdrawn from the proximal end of the housing.

17. (Original) The suturing device of claim 12, wherein the blade is positioned near the proximal end of the housing.

18. (Original) The suturing device of claim 12, wherein the blade is mounted on the outside of the housing.

19. (Original) The suturing device of claim 12, wherein the housing is a hollow body having a proximal opening and an inner surface, and the blade is mounted on the inner surface.

20. (Original) The suturing device of claim 12, wherein the housing includes a finger grip and the blade is mounted on the finger grip.

REMARKS

The present Amendment is in response to the Examiner's Final Office Action mailed March 9, 2006. Claims 1 and 12 are amended. Claims 1, 3, and 5-20 are now pending in view of the above amendments. Applicants respectfully submit that the amendments to the claims do not introduce new matter, and entry thereof is respectfully requested.

Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested in view of the above amendments to the claims and the following remarks. For the Examiner's convenience and reference, Applicant's remarks are presented in the order in which the corresponding issues were raised in the Office Action.

Please note that the following remarks are not intended to be an exhaustive enumeration of the distinctions between any cited references and the claimed invention. Rather, the distinctions identified and discussed below are presented solely by way of example to illustrate some of the differences between the claimed invention and the cited references. In addition, Applicants request that the Examiner carefully review any references discussed below to ensure that Applicants' understanding and discussion of the references, if any, is consistent with the Examiner's understanding.

I. PRIOR ART REJECTIONS

A. Rejection Under 35 U.S.C. §102(b)

Claims 1, 3, 5, 7, 11-14, 16 and 18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by *Violante* (United States Patent No. 3,840,017). Because *Violante* does not teach or suggest each and every element of the rejected claims, Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection in view of the following remarks.

Independent claims 1 and 12 specifically recite a suturing device that includes "a housing" and "a shaft *extending distally from a distal end* of the housing" (emphasis added). Thus, the housing and the shaft extending distally from the distal end of the housing are specifically claimed as separate elements.

In direct contrast, *Violante* fails to teach both a housing *and* a shaft extending distally from a distal end of the housing. In particular, on page 2 of the Office Action, it is noted that the